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SUBJECT: UN REPS TELL U.S. SENATORS SECURITY, INVESTMENT, AND JOB
CREATION ARE CRITICAL TO STABILIZE HAITI

¶1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: Senators Bingaman, Harkin and Corker were briefed October 26 by UN officials on the current security and economic situation in Haiti. UN representatives lauded U.S. support and encouraged continued engagement to reverse the environment of despair that threatens to undermine security gains and economic development. End Summary.

Security Overview

¶3. (U) Acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Luiz Carlos Da Costa told Senators Jeff Bingaman, Bob Corker and Tom Harkin that security in Haiti remains very fragile and rapid improvement in living conditions is essential for stability. Haiti does not have "the luxury of time to wait for projects to bear fruit," Da Costa said.

Cite Soleil

¶4. (SBU) Da Costa characterized the neighborhood of Cite Soleil as a troubled area, but noted there are signs of hope. The 20 million USD in assistance to the area (Note: from the Haiti Stabilization Initiative. End note.) was sorely needed and has provided opportunities for multi-faceted projects. While the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has succeeded in dismantling the leadership of gang networks, its efforts had not totally halted all gang operations. Da Costa remarked, "there will be no security without development and no development without security."

MINUSTAH'S Mandate

¶5. (SBU) The UN Security Council's recent renewal of MINUSTAH's mandate for one year was particularly significant in that it had expanded the mandate to include aiding Haiti in managing its land and maritime borders. These borders are so porous that Haiti has become a transit point for illegal drugs, which in turn fuel the illegal weapons trade. Da Costa said MINUSTAH has requested sixteen boats to reinforce the Haitian Coast Guard, as well as additional police units. (Note: The Haitian Coast Guard currently has nine boats, only two of which are operational. End note.) If borders are better managed, confiscated contraband (totaling 100 million USD in 2006) could yield additional revenue for the Haitian economy.

¶6. (SBU) MINUSTAH Force Commander General Dos Santos Cruz noted that fifty percent of MINUSTAH troops are deployed in Port-au-Prince and

added that the Martissant community is somewhat more difficult to secure than Cite Soleil because of its mountainous terrain, extremely poor living conditions, and the existence of armed, organized groups that are battling for turf. Nevertheless, Martissant was a lesser security threat than Cite Soleil had been before MINUSTAH intervened because the Martissant gangs primarily engaged in internecine warfare but did not challenge the presence of MINUSTAH forces or the Haitian National Police (HNP).

¶7. (SBU) Senator Bingaman asked UN representatives to define concrete actions needed to provide hope and keep people from losing confidence. Da Costa said the UN sees its mandate as comprehensive, although the first critical step is ensuring security. Other actions are required to strengthen the Haitian National Police (HNP), bolster the justice sector and fight corruption.

Police

¶8. (U) Senator Harkin requested figures on police, prison and vehicle requirements. MINUSTAH Police Commissioner Mamadou Diallo responded that the essential security objective is to return to a civilian order as soon as possible. A meaningful increase in civilian police capacity and training is vital to this effort, he added. MINUSTAH provides eighty percent of security while the HNP provides twenty percent. Based on identified security requirements, 14,000 police officers are needed by year 2011. (Note: The HNP currently has approximately 8,900 officers. End Note.) Approximately 80% of security requirements are provided by MINUSTAH and 15% by the HNP.

Prisons

¶9. (U) On prison overcrowding, the National Prison has a capacity of
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600 people but is holding 3,200. It is therefore "a time bomb." The women's prison has no plumbing. There is currently no prison in Gonaives, but construction of one is supposed to start in approximately one month.

Pre-trial detention often lasts months or longer; some people have been held in pre-trial detention for up to three years. A commission has reviewed 400 dossiers of individuals held in pre-trial detention and has ordered 253 detainees released. This morning there was a discovery that four weapons were smuggled into the national prison, intended for use in an end-of-year breakout. There are only 21 corrections officers, among whom corruption is allegedly a problem.

¶9. (U) Da Costa expressed doubt that even the target number of 14,000 police would be adequate to meet Haiti's total security personnel requirements. Actual requirements could be higher. He added that approximately 105 million USD per year is essential to retain momentum in training and equipping the Haitian National Police.

¶10. (SBU) Senator Harkin questioned the impact on security of HNP candidates who do not meet vetting requirements. Da Costa explained that of approximately 7,725 current HNP officers subject to vetting, as many as 1,100 might not pass vetting. Candidates found to be linked to criminal activity will be separated from service and then tracked. Others who fail vetting will be separated and redirected to other employment opportunities, where feasible.

¶11. (U) Senator Corker asked whether current population growth rates contribute in some measure to instability given the numbers of unemployed youth and expected new entries into the workplace. He questioned the likely impact of a growing prison population on prison overcrowding. Da Costa noted that many detention centers were destroyed during the previous political crisis, thereby reinforcing the urgency of case review for those currently incarcerated, as well as the importance of strengthening the justice sector.

Investment and Job Creation

¶12. (U) Da Costa acknowledged that ensuring security was critical to stabilizing Haiti, but emphasized the crucial next step should be generation of economic momentum and job creation. Even though foreign donors contributed 60 percent of Haiti's total budget the previous fiscal year, Da Costa opined that this support alone is not enough to spur economic development. Private investment and long-term job creation are critical to satisfy current and future employment demand, especially given the young age of the population.

Da Costa estimated sixty percent of the population is less than 20 years old. Without job opportunities for these youth, extreme challenges to governance and overall stability will remain, he warned.

¶13. (U) Senator Corker inquired about the type of private investment needed given migration rates to urban areas. Da Costa observed that a belt of economic activity outside of Port-au-Prince must be created to meet the needs of the rural and small town population, and said possible opportunities might lie in:

- maximizing job creation under the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act;
- exploring biofuels technology (Note: Da Costa indicated Brazilian President Da Silva will travel to Haiti in November and discuss biofuels with GoH interlocutors. (Note: Haiti is one of four countries with which the U.S. and Brazil have established a biofuels partnership. End Note.);
- focusing on agriculture; and
- emphasizing technical and vocational schools that link to concrete onward employment.

¶14. (U) Participants:

United Nations

Acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Luiz
Carlos Da Costa
MINUSTAH Force Commander Major-General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos
Cruz
MINUSTAH Police Commissioner Mamadou Mountaga Diallo

United States

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U.S. Ambassador Janet Sanderson
U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Senator Tom Harkin
U.S. Senator Bob Corker
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